

VZCZCXYZ0008
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHQT #0484 0611725
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 021725Z MAR 07
FM AMEMBASSY QUITO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6451
INFO RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA PRIORITY 6499
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 2422
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ MAR 0470
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA PRIORITY 1473
RUEHGT/AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA PRIORITY 0812
RUEHME/AMEMBASSY MEXICO PRIORITY 1523
RUEHGL/AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL PRIORITY 1985
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEADRO/HQ ICE DRO WASHINGTON DC

UNCLAS QUITO 000484

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

EB/ESC/TFS FOR KATHERINE LEAHY AND LEANNE CANNON
S/CT FOR PATTY HILL, GALER, AND NOVIS
TREASURY FOR SGOOCH

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EFIN](#) [ETTC](#) [KTFN](#) [LE](#) [PREL](#) [EC](#)

SUBJECT: ECUADOR - RESPONSE TO ILLICIT CASH COURIER ACTIVITY
REQUEST

REF: STATE 16120

1. (SBU) This a response to State 16120, requesting posts to raise the problem of illicit cash courier activity with host government officials. DEA country attache raised the issue of illicit cash courier activity with Ecuador's Director of the Antinarcotics Directorate (part of the police department) February 13. The Director responded positively to encouragement to intensify efforts on this issue, and resolved that airport police will focus more on checking inbound flights for cash couriers, and that more training will be offered on how to identify bulk cash smuggling in airports.

2. (SBU) The GOE is aware of the serious problem of cash couriers, and is taking action to interdict and prosecute these cases. There have been a number of recent successes. In August 2006, USD 290 thousand in bulk cash was seized at the Guayaquil airport. In October 2006, USD 2.2 million in bulk cash was seized at the Quito airport (the courier was identified as part of an organization that had used Ecuador as a transit point 23 times previously for cash smuggling, for a group operating out of Mexico and Colombia). In January 2007, USD 292 thousand in bulk cash was seized in the Guatemala City airport; the couriers were Ecuadorian and the final destination of the cash was Ecuador.

3. (SBU) The GOE implements a number of training plans related to cash courier activity in conjunction with the Embassy's Narcotics Affairs section (NAS) and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Immigration and Customs Enforcement office (ICE). ICE is considering the possibility of a training program in the Guayaquil and Quito airports beginning in April or May that would bring Customs and Border Protection as well as Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents to Ecuador to provide training on targeting bulk cash smuggling organizations.

4. (SBU) Although the GOE is making some progress in combating cash smuggling, many challenges remain. Ecuador has enacted a law that codifies the requirements of Special Recommendation IX on Cash Couriers, but lacks strong enforcement of the law. Another problem is the generally uncontrolled border that exists between Ecuador and Colombia.

JEWELL